



**2016-2017 AmeriCorps*State
Request for Planning
Formula Grant Applications**



ISSUED: March 11, 2016
DEADLINE: April 26, 2016 - 5:00 pm CST

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CFDA Number: 94.006

For New AmeriCorps Programs in Nebraska

ServeNebraska may have funds available for AmeriCorps State Planning Grants in the 2016-17 program year.

1. **Announcement Information**

ServeNebraska is pleased to announce the availability of federal funding in the form of AmeriCorps State Planning grants. The following entities are encouraged to apply: Public or private nonprofit organizations, including labor organizations, faith-based and other community organizations that have their 501c3 status; educational institutions (local school districts, intermediate school districts, institutions of higher education); government entities within Nebraska (e.g., cities, counties and state); and partnerships or consortia who have not received AmeriCorps*State funds in the past.

2. **Purpose of request**

A. **AmeriCorps Planning Grants**

Allows organizations to begin developing their plans to host an AmeriCorps program. Planning grant activities may involve work to establish a new program in Nebraska or replicate successful existing program models in unserved or underserved areas of Nebraska. Organizations use planning grants to become better prepared to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant in the following grant cycle. Planning grants may not be used to support AmeriCorps members.

B. **The Purpose of AmeriCorps Programs**

To engage AmeriCorps members in direct service and capacity-building activities to address unmet community needs. Local programs design service activities for a team of members serving up to one year. Grants are awarded based on CNCS focus areas: education, economic opportunity, healthy futures, environmental stewardship, disaster services, veteran and military families.

3. **Responsibilities of operating an AmeriCorps Planning Grant Program**

- A. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, submitting documents pertaining to the AmeriCorps State application process as requested by ServeNebraska; such as draft narratives, a budget, and financial assessment and position descriptions. Reports will be requested on an as needed basis.
- B. Planning subgrantees are required attend ServeNebraska Program Launch June 16-17, 2016 to be held in Lincoln. Mandatory attendance to all program leader meeting and trainings. AmeriCorps member events including Days of Service and Symposium Celebration of service events.
- C. Planning subgrantees must submit regular reports throughout the grant period generally designed to assist the programs in creating design and direction for national service programming. Grant reports take a variety of formats in the following categories:
 - a) **Periodic Expense reports and Invoice for Grant Funds.** The subgrantee agrees to submit to ServeNebraska Periodic Expense Reports, including both federal and match expenditures, filed electronically at least quarterly for the grant period.
 - b) **Subgrantee Reporting.** ServeNebraska will provide written feedback on each of the products submitted throughout the period in order to help develop the subgrantee's

program design. By preparing these documents, planning grant recipients will be developing many of the major components of an AmeriCorps grant proposal. ServeNebraska will provide more information – including sample forms, sample plans and objectives worksheets throughout the grant period. Subgrantees will receive written feedback from ServeNebraska.

- D. Formula application.** The subgrantee agrees to submit to ServeNebraska an application for AmeriCorps*State Formula funding before the final due date to be determined in Spring 2017 (date pending release of the notice of funding opportunity from federal source.)

**Note: If at any point during the project period a Planning Subgrantee determines that an AmeriCorps*State Formula program is not a realistic or desired goal for the organization, the subgrantee will notify ServeNebraska in writing and this grant will be terminated including progress and financial reporting requirements with the exception of a final narrative progress report submitted in My Service Log.*

2016-17 Planning Grant Process Timeline

Planning Grant RFA released	March 11, 2016
Mandatory Informational Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 18, 2016 @ 9:30am Non-Profit Hub, Lincoln • March 18, 2016 @ 3:00pm Grand Island Public Library • March 23, 2016 @ 10:00am Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center- Omaha
Notice of Intent to Apply	April 15, 2016 https://surveymonkey.com/r/ACformula2016-2017
Planning Grant Application Due	April 25, 2016 by 5:00 p.m. via email, submission to audrey.jackson@nebraska.gov
Notification of Planning Grant Awards	Early June

4. Application Preparation and Submission

What information must be submitted in the grant application?

- A. **Cover Page**-Which should include the following information(cover page is not included in the 3 page limit)(see attachments)-Project title, Organization contact information, Type of applicant, EIN#, DUNS#, Contact person, Focus areas, Geographic area, Federal funds requested, cash/In-kind match requirement
- B. **Narratives**-Applicants are required to complete a document that should have the following one inch margins, double spaced, and typed in Times New Romans font size 12, page limit 3

Problem/Need

- Describe the critical need of the community you wish to use AmeriCorps member to address
- Include information about the extent/severity of the need

Theory of Change

- Describe the design of the program

- Activities in which members will serve and how those activities will address the needs in the community
- Specific needs you plan to solve with an AmeriCorps program
- How will members solve this community problem

Organizational Capacity

- Describe how your organization has the experience, staffing, management structure, and necessary partnerships in place
- Provide examples of your organization's prior experience administering similar projects or programs, including experience managing other state or federal grants.
- Systems and processes for programmatic and fiscal oversight or plans to develop this capacity
- Describe plans for raising the matching funds

- C. **Budget Narrative-** Planning Grant Budgets could be awarded up to \$25,000 with the following line items available. Source of match documentation is flexible and can be revised during clarification. Allowable additional expenses may be included-final budget guidance will be provided to awarded applicants during the clarification process.

Budget Narrative: Planning Grant			
	CNCS Share	Grantee Share	Total Amount
A. Project Personnel Expenses			
B. Personnel Fringe Benefits			
C. Travel			
D. Equipment			
E. Supplies			
F. Contractual and Consultant Services			
G. Other Support Costs			
Budget Totals			
Percentage			
Source of Matching Funds			
County Commission Funds			
In-kind Contributions			

5. Proposed Planning Grant Budget

Grant funds are provided on a reimbursement basis. Match documentation must support at least 24% match Using either cash or in-kind contributions. Programs will be reimbursed after providing support documentation for actual expenses. Only actual, allowable expenses, will be reimbursed for each funded project.

Note: If you are using mileage as a calculation for travel, you cannot request a mileage reimbursement rate higher than the IRS rate of **\$.54/mile**.

The budgeted costs reflect both granted funds and required match. Both sections are subject to all rules and regulations of AmeriCorps funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service. All personnel or contract positions funded with a planning grant are subject to National Service Criminal History Check requirements which include a state criminal history check, FBI fingerprint based check and a nationwide search of the sex offender registry.

Expenses allocated for planning grant purposes cannot be used to pay salary or contracts to write an application for federal funds. Instead, funds can be used to mobilize partners, plan and coordinate strategies, conduct meetings and a narrow selection of other expenses. A list of approved expenses includes (but is not limited to):

- Personnel hours for organization staff meetings and work associated with creating, structure, goals and program design for future programming.
- Travel and hospitality expenses associated with convening organization staff and partners to plan.
- Professional development opportunities for personnel and contract positions associated with gaining skills in national service program management and implementation including grant writing.
- Some organizational support expenses incurred while planning to apply for an AmeriCorps program including a percentage of technology costs (email service, phone or conference call service, etc.).
- Staff time associated with developing planning grant required reports.

The 24% required match for Planning Grants is based on the total grant amount expended. The total grant amount is the sum of the federal amount and the match provided by the grantee. Please see chart below:

Federal Share Requested	Match Amount Required (24%)	Total Grant Amount
\$5,000	\$1,579	\$6,578
\$10,000	\$3,158	\$13,158
\$15,000	\$4,737	\$19,737

Funding Availability

Formula funding for ServeNebraska is allotted by the Corporation for National and Community Service based on population. Using these funds, ServeNebraska makes operating grants available. These grants either support an organization that is ready to establish a new national service program or support, expand, or replicate an existing national service program.

6. Selection Criteria

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. ServeNebraska will engage external reviewers to provide insight and input with respect to eligible applications. In addition, ServeNebraska staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and selection factors described in this *Request for Applications*.

7. Review and Selection Process

Compliance Review

Compliance Review: ServeNebraska staff will review all applications to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to Staff Review, an applicant must satisfy all of the application requirements.

- Submit a notice of Intent to Apply by the deadline of April 15, 2016.
- Submit an application and all required additional documents by the application submission deadline of April 25, 2016.
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and additional documents and follows the instructions provided in this *Request for Applications*
- Assessment of the critical need

Grant Review

ServeNebraska staff will review all applications to ensure that application guidelines are met and that appropriate attachments and supporting documents are included. Staff review all grants meeting the minimum requirements and evaluate the narratives and budget and any other elements as required in this RFA. In addition, ServeNebraska staff will evaluate applications to determine whether they meet focus areas, represent underserved or unserved areas of the state (including those with scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources), demonstrate innovation, build diversity of Nebraska's portfolio of programs as far as need served, members targeted for recruitment or other factors.

The most promising planning grants based on staff recommendations, along with the applications most consistent with focus areas, become a part of the proposed Planning Grant portfolio. This information is provided to the AmeriCorps State and National Committee of ServeNebraska Commission. The committee will also make a determination about whether an application meets an identified priority. ServeNebraska commission may give priority to an application related to a state or federal priority.

Once the available planning grant funding amount is known, ServeNebraska makes a recommendation to the full Commission about which applicants should be awarded planning grant funding under this competition. Decisions to provide a reduced funding will be negotiated with applicants by ServeNebraska staff based on the Commission decisions. ServeNebraska staff will work grantees to revise their applications and budgets accordingly for submission to for approval and award.

ServeNebraska is committed to transparency in grant making. The following information pertaining to this competition for planning grant applications will be published on the website at ServeNebraska www.servenebraska.gov after all grants are awarded

8. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

ServeNebraska will award grants following the grant selection announcement. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition **no later than the first part of June 2016**. If applicants are selected to receive funding under this RFA will be required to enter their application and budget information into eGrants, the electronic grant application system of the Corporation for National and Community Service. At this time, ServeNebraska staff will provide applicants resources, instructions, and additional assistance as needed. No funds can be awarded until the applicant has their information into the eGrants system.